

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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TAGS: ETRD, CH

SUBJ: THIRD-COUNTRY REPRESENTATION AT CANTON TRADE FAIR

REF: STATE 172473

SUMMARY. THE SINO-BRITISH TRADE COUNCIL IS THE ONLY SEMI-OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION THAT PERFORMS FUNCTIONS AT THE CANTON FAIR SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH ARE PLANNED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR US-CHINA TRADE (NCUSCT). THE PAST ROLE OF THE JAPANESE INTERNATIONAL TRADE PROMOTION ASSOCIATION (JITPA) AT THE FAIRS IS NOT ANALOGOUS. OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE RELIED ENTIRELY ON OFFICIALS FROM THEIR MISSIONS IN PEKING AND/OR HONG KONG TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THEIR BUSINESSMEN AT THE FAIRS. END SUMMARY.

1. USLO HAS OBTAINED FOLLOWING INFORMATION FROM THIRD-COUNTRY COLLEAGUES IN PEKING ON SERVICES PROVIDED FOR THEIR BUSINESSMEN AT THE SEMI-ANNUAL CANTON FAIRS.

2. BRITAIN - FOR SOME YEARS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SINO-BRITISH TRADE COUNCIL (SBTC) AND COMMERCIAL OFFICERS FROM THE BRITISH MISSION (NOW EMBASSY) IN PEKING AND TRADE COMMISSION IN HONG KONG HAVE BEEN ATTENDING THE CANTON

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FAIRS. SBTC TRADITIONALLY SENDS ONE MAN WHO MAINTAINS A

SUITE IN WHICH A TYPEWRITER, NEWSPAPERS AND REFRESHMENTS ARE AVAILABLE TO VISITING BRITISH BUSINESSMEN (OCCASIONALLY A SECOND SBTC REPRESENTATIVE IS ON HAND, BUT USUALLY ONLY IF ACCOMPANYING A VISITING UK DELEGATION). THE OFFICIAL UK REPRESENTATIVES FROM PEKING AND HONG KONG ALSO MAINTAIN A SUITE, IN WHICH READING MATERIAL AND DRINKS ARE AVAILABLE. ACCORDING TO BRITISH COMMERCIAL FIRST SECRETARY IN PEKING DEREK MARCH, THEY ARE ALL THERE LARGELY TO PROVIDE MORAL SUPPORT TO UK BUSINESSMEN, BUT THE BETTER PART OF THIS "NANNYING" WORK FALLS ON SBTC. THIS LEAVES MARCH AND HIS OTHER OFFICIAL COLLEAGUES MORE TIME TO WORK ON PARTICULAR PROBLEMS, EITHER BY COUNSELING BUSINESSMEN IN DIFFICULTY OR, OCCASIONALLY, BY INTERCEDING WITH FAIR OFFICIALS. THE UK COMMERCIAL OFFICERS ALSO SEEK TO ASSESS FAIR TRENDS BY KEEPING IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH THEIR BUSINESSMEN AND OTHER KNOWLEDGEABLE TRADERS AT THE FAIRS.

3. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, UK COMMERCIAL OFFICERS AND THE SBTC FEEL THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS WORK IS DECLINING, SINCE MOST BRITISH BUSINESSMEN BY NOW KNOW THE ROPES AND NEED LESS SUPPORT. BOTH ARE CONSIDERING REDUCING THE TIME THEY SPEND AT FUTURE FAIRS.

4. CANADA - THERE IS NO NON-OFFICIAL CANADIAN TRADE PRESENCE AT THE FAIRS EXCEPT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL CANADIAN BUSINESSMEN. HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY IN PEKING, SUPPORTED BY THE CANADIAN TRADE COMMISSION IN HONG KONG, MAINTAINS A SUITE AT THE FAIR SIMILAR TO THAT RUN BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES. AGAIN, THE WORK IS MOSTLY THAT OF MORAL SUPPORT, BUT THE CANADIANS FIND IT USEFUL AND INTEND TO CONTINUE THEIR PRESENCE IN FUTURE.

5. GERMANY - THERE IS NO GERMAN TRADE ASSOCIATION REPRESENTED AT THE FAIRS, BUT COMMERCIAL OFFICERS FROM PEKING AND HONG KONG DO ATTEND. THEIR BUSINESSMEN ARE MOSTLY OLD-TIMERS, AND REQUIRE LITTLE IN THE WAY OF ASSISTANCE.

6. JAPAN - UNTIL THE NORMALIZATION OF SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS, NO OFFICIAL JAPANESE VISITED THE FAIRS. SINCE THEN, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OFFICERS FROM THE JAPANESE CONSULATE GENERAL IN HONG KONG AND EMBASSY PEKING HAVE ATTENDED. THESE OFFICERS HAVE NOT PROVIDED FORMAL ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSMEN AND HAVE REGARDED THEMSELVES ONLY AS OBSERVERS. ACCORDING TO EMBOFF IKEDA, THEY ARE NOW CONSIDERING WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, THEY SHOULD PLAY AT FUTURE FAIRS.

7. PRIOR TO NORMALIZATION OF SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS, THE

JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TRADE PROMOTION ASSOCIATION (JITPA)
USUALLY SENT TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM PEKING (SEE PEKING 0608
ON JITPA PEKING REPRESENTATION) AND ONE OR TWO FROM
JAPAN TO ATTEND FAIRS. AT THE TIME, JITPA PLAYED AN
IMPORTANT ROLE SINCE IT REPRESENTED "FRIENDLY FIRMS,"
WHICH WERE THE ONLY ONES TRADING WITH CHINA AT THE FAIRS, AND
SINCE IT WAS NECESSARY TO HAVE JITPA'S ENDORSEMENT IN ORDER
TO BE DESIGNATED A "FRIENDLY FIRM." THAT SYSTEM STARTED
TO BREAK DOWN EVEN BEFORE THE 1972 TANAKA VISIT, AND JITPA'S
ROLE AT THE FAIRS HAS BECOME MORE NOMINAL SINCE. JITPA
CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN A SUITE, WHERE PAMPHLETS AND OTHER
EXPLANATORY MATERIAL AND INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE FOR
JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN, BUT NOT COPYING MACHINES OR SECRETARIAL
SERVICES.
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8. THIS RELATIVELY MODEST LEVEL OF OFFICIAL AND SEMI-
OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION AT THE FAIRS MAY SEEM SURPRISING
IN VIEW OF THE JAPANESE REPUTATION FOR PRACTICALLY OVER-
RUNNING RECENT FAIRS IN NUMBERS, AND OPERATING IN HIGHLY
ORGANIZED FASHION. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED, HOWEVER, THAT
MANY OF THE BIG JAPANESE TRADING FIRMS BRING ALONG A LARGE
NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES, SOME OF WHOM MAY BE THERE TO
PROVIDE THEIR OWN STAFF SUPPORT.

9. ITALY - SINCE 1971 REPRESENTATIVES OF SOME ITALIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE HAVE ATTENDED THE FAIRS, BUT NOT TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC ADVISORY OR ASSISTANCE SERVICES TO BUSINESSMEN. THEY HAVE EITHER LED VISITING GROUPS OF NEWCOMERS OR PROVIDED SERVICES AKIN TO THAT OF A TRAVEL AGENT. THE ITALIAN FOREIGN TRADING INSTITUTE REPRESENTATIVE IN PEKING HAS ATTENDED FAIRS FOR SOME YEARS, BUT SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SINO-ITALIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, HE DOES SO UNDER ITALIAN EMBASSY AUSPICES AND SHARES THIS RESPONSIBILITY WITH OTHER ITALIAN COMMERCIAL OFFICERS. THESE OFFICIALS DO NOT ATTEMPT TO COVER THE ENTIRE FAIR, AND THEIR ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSMEN IS "VERY INFORMAL", ACCORDING TO ITALIAN FIRST SECRETARY BERTINETTO.

10. OTHER COUNTRIES - FRANCE, BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS,
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SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES, YUGOSLAVIA AND A NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES SEND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES TO CANTON DURING THE FAIRS, PROVIDING THEM EITHER FROM PEKING OR HONG KONG, OFTEN DEPENDING ON PERSONNEL AVAILABILITY AT THE TIME. THESE COUNTRIES DO NOT HAVE SEMI-OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVES AT THE FAIRS, AND THEIR OFFICIALS DO NOT MAINTAIN A VERY FORMAL PRESENCE. SOME MAY ONLY VISIT CANTON FOR SHORT PERIODS. OPERATING OUT OF ORDINARY HOTEL ROOMS, THESE COMMERCIAL OFFICERS TRY TO KEEP TABS ON THEIR BUSINESSMEN, PROVIDING OCCASIONAL ASSISTANCE AND SEEKING TO LEARN SOMETHING OF FAIR DEVELOPMENTS IN GENERAL.

11. COMMENT: FROM THE FOREGOING IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PRC IS CORRECT IN VIEWING THE PROPOSED NCUSCT PRESENCE AT THE FAIRS AS ANALOGOUS TO THE UK'S SBTC. JITPA HAD A UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT TYPE OF FUNCTION, AND ITS FUTURE ROLE IS, TO SOME EXTENT, UNCERTAIN. NO OTHER THIRD COUNTRY NON-OFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE REPRESENTED AT CANTON FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO NATIONAL BUSINESSMEN.

1. FOREGOING DRAFTED PRIOR TO RECEIPT HONG KONG 8978 AND STATE 178583. IN ANSWER TO DEPARTMENT'S FURTHER QUESTIONS, BRITISH AND CANADIANS USUALLY HAVE AT LEAST ONE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE ON HAND AT ALL TIMES. THIS OFFICER MAY BE FROM PEKING OR HONG KONG DEPENDING ON PERSONNEL AVAILABILITY AT THE TIME. SOMETIMES TWO MAY BE PRESENT AT ONCE, OCCASIONALLY THREE; OTHER GOVERNMENTS USUALLY HAVE ONLY ONE OFFICER PRESENT FROM PEKING OR HONG KONG AT ANY GIVEN TIME. TO BEST OUR KNOWLEDGE, NO GOVERNMENTS SEND HOME OFFICE REPRESENTATIVES TO CANTON FAIRS UNLESS ACCOMPANYING VISITING DELEGATIONS OR VISITING CHINA ON OTHER BUSINESS WHILE FAIRS ARE BEING HELD.
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